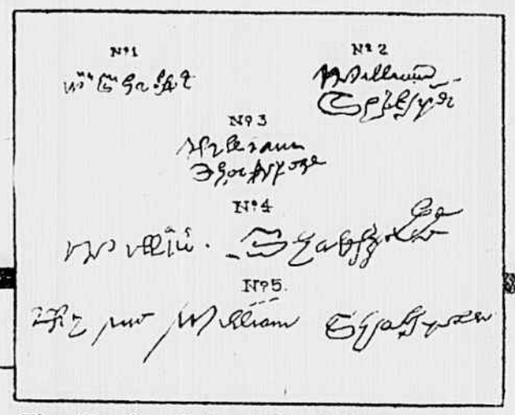
by Analytical Study of His Works

ous Wood Cut of Shakespeare's
tre, the Globe

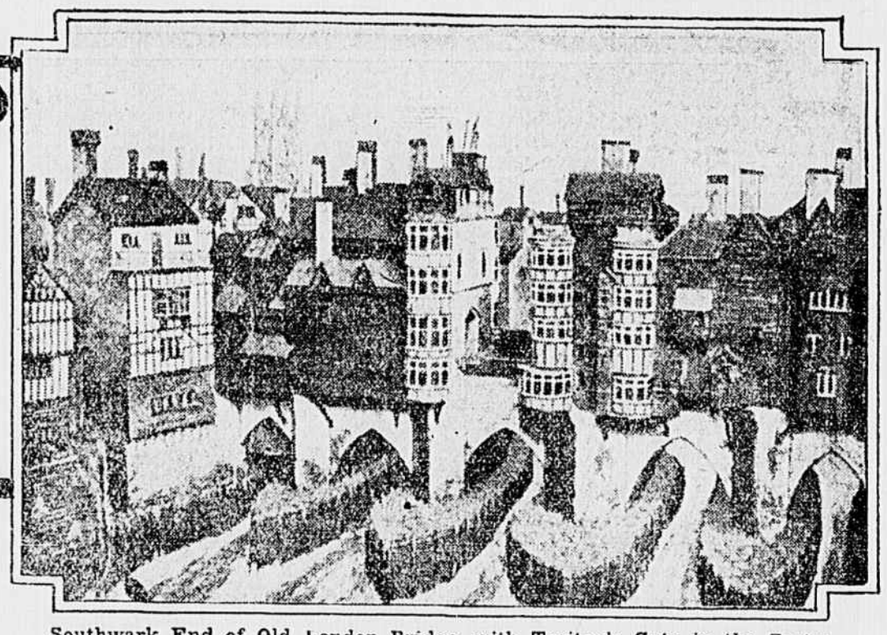
Shakespeare

ddies of Bacon and Shakespeare by
Madox Brown

The Residence of Ann Hathaway, Shakespeare's Wife



Five Genuine Autographs of Shakespeare—Note the Spelling, "Shakspere"



Southwark End of Old London Bridge, with Traitor's Gate in the Centre Showing Spiked Heads, as It All Was in Shakespeare's Time

Charles Dickens's Profound Admiration for Shakespeare

By Harry Furniss

I HAPPENED, incidentally, to mention Charles Dickens to the late Sir James O'Dowd, then Honorary Treasurer of the Garrick Club, and this led to his telling me a page of history that ought to have been, but never has been, written.

"I speak from memory," he said. "It was on the club opening day of April, 1854, when Dickens was invited to make a speech here on Shakespeare."

"I cannot assist your memory," I put in, "for I was exactly five days old on that date."

"Well, I was a young man," he continued—"a very young man. That is why the interesting event I have never seen recorded is so deeply impressed upon my mind. I looked upon the fact of being present as making a red-letter day in my life. In those days it was the custom of the club to have an annual Shakespeare dinner; some celebrity took the chair, and speeches were made. On the particular occasion to which I refer, Charles Dickens was our chairman. This was an event of peculiar interest, for, as you know, Dickens had had a quarrel, in fact, two quarrels, with the club—the Thackeray affair, and all that, is old history—and had been elected a member again. So, to smooth matters over, it was considered a graceful act to invite Dickens to take the chair at our Shakespeare dinner."

"Dickens," said Sir James O'Dowd, "fully appreciated the compliment paid him, and the spirit in which he had been asked to preside at the board round which this brilliant company was gathered.

"His speech was one of his most brilliant efforts, and the best after-dinner speech I have ever heard. It surprises me that in no life of Dickens is it ever mentioned. It was a carefully prepared speech—both in matter and manner. Dickens was a born actor; and he acted his speech that night with an intensity that surprised us. The toast he proposed was Shakespeare. I forget his exact words, but the general idea I shall never forget. It was a surprise to us all.

"He began by saying that we were met to celebrate an event, a great event. Not, as some thought, merely the birthday of a dramatist and an actor. We met on that day to celebrate a great deal more. We met on that day to celebrate the birthday of a vast army of living men and women, who would live forever with an actuality greater than that of the men and women whose external forms we saw around us, and whom we knew better than we knew ourselves—types of humanity, the inner working of whose souls was open to us, as were the faces of ordinary men.

"'On this day was born not only this lasting embodiment of deep insight into life and its problems, but also 'Laughter holding both his sides.' On this day was born Falstaff, who, like one who takes the chair on such an occasion as this, has to be the cause of speaking in others. And on this day the famous Justice Shallow, who, though you may not admire his qualities, will live in the memory of all who laugh at him, and of all who try to personate him on the stage. 'Tis the heart, Master Page, 'tis here, 'tis here. I have seen the time, with my long sword I would have made you four tall fellows skip like rats.'

"Dickens's own impersonation of the conceited justice of the peace, his head bent with age, the feeble step, with a certain attempted smartness, assumed and maintained with wonderful accuracy, as described by Mrs. Cowden-Clarke, rose before the mind's eye of all present, while Dickens spoke these words, just as he had spoken them upon the stage, with an articulation, part lisp, part thickness of utterance, part of a kind of impeded sibilation like that of a voice that 'pipes and whistles in the sound' through loss of teeth; and with a humor of expression in effete energy of action and would-be fire of spirit, that marvellously imaged fourscore years in its attempt to denote vigor long since extinct. Dickens went on:

"'On this day, too, was born Macbeth, the type of all who show how the first fall into evil leads even men capable of noble thoughts down, eventually, into the lowest depths.

"'To-day was born a certain Signior Benedick of Padua—that is, not the Benedick of this or that theatrical company, but the constant occasion of merriment among the persons represented in 'Much Ado About Nothing'; 'all mirth,' as Don Pedro has it, 'from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot'; and who may well inspire mirth in all.

"'To-day was born a villain, for whose birth we may yet be glad, because he was not the ordinary villain of the stage. For Iago can be portrayed without 'frowning, sneering diabolically, grinning, and elaborately doing everything else that would induce Othello to run him through the body very early in the play.' Shakespeare's Iago is a man who could and did make friends, who could dissect his master's soul without flourishing his scalpel as if it were a walking-stick; who could overpower Emilia by other arts than a sign-of-the-Saracen's-Head grimness; who could be a boon companion without, ipso facto, warning all beholders off by the portentous phenomenon; who could sing a song and clink a can naturally enough, and stab a man really in the dark—not in a transparent notification of himself as going about seeking whom to stab.

"'On this day was born the ideal embodiment of woman's passionate love, whom her lover in his passion idealized as the sun at dawn rising to——

Kill the envious moon,
Who is already pale and sick with grief,
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she
Be not her maid, since she is envious;
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it.

"'And on this day was born a fool, not 'dressed in vestal libery, but dressed in motley, who 'laid him down and basked him in the sun,' and, as quoted by the melancholy Jaques (whose words are inwoven in this tablecloth before me: 'All the world's a stage') described, for all time, the qualities, the privileges and the duties of the satirist of him who, like this fool, 'snould he so deep contemplative' as to make the sage 'ambitious for a motley suit. 'Invest me in my motley: give me leave to speak my mand, and I will, through and through, cleanse the foul body of the whole infected world, if they will but patiently receive my medicine.'

"In like manner Dickens dealt with many more of Shakespeare's characters, each time acting and speaking the lines with consummate art and skill.

"Dickens went on to say that this was also the birthday of the English novel. 'Every writer of fiction, although he may not adopt the dramatic form, writes, in effect, for the stage. He may never write plays, but the truth and passion which are in him must be more or less reflected in the great mirror which he holds up to Nature.'

"Furthermore, he reminded us that it was the birthday of some of those present—of Compton, of Vandenhoff, of Wallack. For their art and fame would not have been but for the birth of him whose birthday they were celebrating. He would go further, and say that it was the birthday of that Club. For if there had never been a Shakespeare there never would have been a Garrick, and if there had never been a Garrick there would never have been a Garrick Club.

'No one that was not present can at all realize the startling effect of this speech. Dickens was a born actor, and the circumstances under which he spoke that day gave zest to the effort. There was the reconciliation with the Club; the presence of his most intimate friends; a subject that lent itself, above all others to dramatic treatment. He did not save himself; but in the quotations, which may or may not have been exactly the ones here given, he gave himself acting parts, which he delivered in a way equal to the efforts of any tragedian and comedian combined."

al Knowledge of Music and of the Law

legal profession. More than one lawyer has advanced the theory that Shakespeare had, during some period of his career, actually practised law.

In a recent number of the periodical Case and Comment, the Hon. John H. Light, attorney-general of Connecticut, makes some interesting observations on this subject, quoting others of his profession and drawing illustrations from the plays.

Mr. Castle, an English barrister, in his book entitled "The Legal Acquirements of Shakespeare," says his legal knowledge could not have been picked up in an attorney's office, but could only have been learned by an actual attendance in the courts, at pleaders' chambers, and on circuit, or by associating intimately with members of the bench and bar. But, he adds, even on this supposition, it is not easy to explain his minute and undeviating accuracy in a subject where no layman who has indulged in such copious and ostentatious display of legal technicalities has ever yet succeeded in keeping himself from tipping.

Lord Campbell observes that "there is nothing so dangerous as for one not of the craft to tamper with our freemasonry"; that "while novelists and dramatists are constantly making mistakes as to the law of marriage, of wills and of inheritance—to Shakespeare's law, lavishly as he propounds it, there can neither be demurrer, nor bill of exceptions, nor writ of error."

Expert Testimony to Shakespeare's Legal Mind

This is certainly expert testimony, coming as it does from one of England's learned chief justices; and I may add that others who have worn the ermine support his statement. Malone and Payne Collier both insist that Shakespeare must have been a lawyer. The poet's generous treatment of members of the profession is significant of his attitude toward it. It was quite the fashion to rail at lawyers, but he evidently liked them and appreciated their importance. He makes the duke, in "Measure for Measure," address Isabel as follows:

"Come hither, Isabel:
Your friar is now your prince: As I was then
Advertising, and holy to your business,
Not changing heart with habit, I am still
Attorney'd at your service."

This shows very clearly the ethical side of an attorney's duty toward his client. It is to be "holy" to his "business," "not changing heart with habit" when "attorney'd at" his "service." It is apparent here that the poet knew an attorney is obliged to be true to his client and to the court; to know and serve his client's highest interest with singleness of purpose and skill, and to keep his secrets, and inform him from time to time of the state of his business.

He Knew the Fine Points of Legal Ethics

The following passage in "Cymbeline" shows an appreciation of the duty resting upon an attorney to master his case:

"Clo. . . . I will make
One of her women lawyer to me; for
I yet not understand the case myself."

While a client may be excusable for not understanding his case, it is the duty of the lawyer to know all of the law and the facts pertaining to it.

In the "Winter's Tale," one of the servants, in speaking of a certain character, said: "He hath . . . points, more than all the lawyers in Bohemia can learnedly handle, though they come to him by the gross."

In the preparation of briefs, it is customary to develop "the points" in a case, and support them by authorities, and it is the duty of the judge in turn to give an opinion on "the points."

The comments of Hamlet on the skull show unusual familiarity with lawyers and legal terms.

Ham. "There's another. Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddits now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures and his tricks? Why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery?"

It may be interesting to note, in view of the fact that many women are now entering the legal profession, that Shakespeare imposed the difficult duty of defending Antonio upon Portia, and Claudio upon Isabel, two of the most intellectual and eloquent women to be found in his dramas. In the trial scene, each is confronted with the seeming injustice of the rigor of the law, and each in turn made a plea for mercy which has become a classic. Shakespeare was among the first to endow women with all the intellectual and spiritual gifts enjoyed by men. He could see no impropriety in making them advocates, and appointing them to plead in a court of justice.

There are several legal publications known to have been accessible to Shakespeare, among which are Totell's Precedents, 1572; Pulton's Statutes, 1578, and Fraunce's Lawiers Logike, 1588. He appears to have been familiar with the contents of these books and legal proceedings. This is clearly shown in "Measure for Measure" and the first and second parts of "Henry VI." These books give evidence of unusual legal acquirements, for without such knowledge they could not have been written. Mr. Castle says that "Measure for Measure" shows that he had a very accurate knowledge of the law of precontract, and that in the first part of "Henry V." the proclamation of the lord was the work of a lawyer, and that an equally accurate knowledge of the law and practice of Parliament is displayed.

He showed a perfect mastery of the nomenclature of the law of real property. Let me give just two or three examples.

"Like a fair house built upon another man's ground; so I have lost my edifice by mistaking the place where I erected it."

This principle of law is not apt to be known by laymen; so, by using it, Shakespeare displayed legal knowledge commonly known by lawyers only.

Was he a trained lawyer? I incline to the opinion that he never studied law as a science, but that he had a natural aptitude for it, and it is possible he was a clerk in a lawyer's office at Stratford for a number of years before going to London, and that there and in London he frequented the courts and associated with lawyers and judges.

The Hand of Shylock Stayed by Portia.—By Ramberg

In the comedy of "The Merchant of Venice," notably in the scene here pictured, Shakespeare's knowledge of the law is displayed in a manner that is a perpetual marvel to member of the legal profession